



# MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

NOAA  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
NORTHEAST REGION  
HABITAT CONSERVATION DIVISION

June 2006

**GLOUCESTER, MA OFFICE, ONE BLACKBURN DRIVE, GLOUCESTER, MA 01930**

## **PROGRESS ON NEW EFH DESIGNATIONS FOR NEW ENGLAND**

The New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) met on June 13 and approved a range of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) designation alternatives for 24 species in the Northeast region. The NEFMC, acting on the recommendations of their Habitat Committee, also selected preferred designation alternatives for most of these species. This action is the first step in the revision of the existing EFH descriptions (text and maps), which were adopted by the NEFMC in 1998. The current definitions will remain in place until 2008, when the new Omnibus EFH Amendment is anticipated to be completed.

Once proposals for new Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs) are selected by the NEFMC in September, the entire set of EFH and HAPC designation alternatives will be analyzed and presented to the NEFMC for approval in November. Phase one of the Omnibus Amendment will also include an evaluation of non-fishing impacts on EFH in the region. Public comments will be solicited in December. Then the NEFMC Habitat Plan Development Team and Habitat Committee will begin work on phase two of the Omnibus EFH Amendment, which will re-evaluate the effects of fishing on EFH and make recommendations regarding measures to minimize the adverse impacts of fishing on EFH. ([David.Stevenson@noaa.gov](mailto:David.Stevenson@noaa.gov), 978/ 281-9118)

## **PRELIMINARY PERMIT APPLICATIONS FILED FOR TIDAL PROJECTS**

On June 12, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) issued a notice of application by Tidewater Associates for a preliminary permit regarding a tidal power project in Cutler, ME (P-12674). If issued, the preliminary permit provides the applicant 36 months to investigate the viability of the site for the proposed project. The investigations usually consist of an economic analysis, engineering plans, and an assessment of environmental impacts. A preliminary permit does not authorize construction. The proposed Cutler Tidal Power Project would consist of a 4,200-foot long by 23-foot high dam, power house, transmission lines, and appurtenant facilities. The Cutler project is the fifth such preliminary permit notice for the northeast region. However, it is the only one that includes the construction of a new dam. Preliminary permit applications were filed for four other tidal power projects in New England – the Kennebec River (P-12666)

and Penobscot River (P-12668) projects in Maine; the Piscataqua River project (P-12664) in New Hampshire; and the Cape and Islands project (P-12670) in Massachusetts. Unlike the Culter project, these four did not propose dams. They would consist of “tidal in stream energy conversion” devices with rotating propeller blades, much like a windmill underwater. FERC issued notices of application for preliminary permits at these additional sites in May. FERC notices and public comments filed for these projects can be found on the FERC e-Library at [www.ferc.gov](http://www.ferc.gov). ([sean.mcdermott@noaa.gov](mailto:sean.mcdermott@noaa.gov), 978/ 281-9113)

## **JAMES J. HOWARD MARINE SCIENCES LABORATORY, HIGHLANDS, NJ 07732**

### **ELLIS ISLAND SEAWALL REHABILITATION**

The National Park Service (NPS) has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the rehabilitation of the historic seawall surrounding Ellis Island at the mouth of the Hudson River in New York and New Jersey. Over the past year, HCD staff has coordinated with NPS staff on the potential impacts of the proposed project on aquatic resources and EFH. The proposed project includes the removal of the sunken historic ferry *Ellis Island*, and the repair of more than 200 damaged sections of the 6,450-foot long seawall. HCD staff and staff from the Protected Resources Division commented on the EA. ([Karen.Greene@noaa.gov](mailto:Karen.Greene@noaa.gov), 732/ 872-3023 or [Julie.Crocker@noaa.gov](mailto:Julie.Crocker@noaa.gov), 978/ 281-9300 for ESA issues)

### **NEW YORK/NEW JERSEY HARBOR DEEPENING**

HCD staff from Milford and Sandy Hook met with staff from the New York District, Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) and the New York Department of Environmental Conservation to discuss several issues related to the deepening of the New York/New Jersey Harbor navigation channels. One issue is the creation of reef habitat near Hoffman and Swinbourn Islands using rock excavated from the deepening project, as suggested by HCD staff as part of the essential fish habitat consultation. Baseline site sampling data, the size of the project, and post-construction monitoring were also discussed, as well as the dredging of the Anchorage Channel and the need for seasonal dredging windows. Additional coordination on these and other aspects of the Harbor deepening will be occurring over the next few months.

([Karen.Greene@noaa.gov](mailto:Karen.Greene@noaa.gov), 732/ 872-3023 and [Mike.Ludwig@noaa.gov](mailto:Mike.Ludwig@noaa.gov), 203/ 882-6504)

### **NEW YORK DISTRICT MAINTENANCE DREDGING PROJECTS**

The New York District, ACOE issued public notices for the maintenance dredging of two federal navigation channels in Monmouth County, New Jersey; the Shrewsbury River Federal Navigation Channel and the Sandy Hook Bay at Leonardo Channel. In both cases, the ACOE has scheduled the project to occur when impacts on aquatic resources, including EFH, will be minimized. As a result, HCD had no objections to the projects and no additional conservation recommendations to offer. HCD will continue to coordinate with the ACOE on these projects should the funding status and schedules change. ([Karen.Greene@noaa.gov](mailto:Karen.Greene@noaa.gov), 732/ 872-3023)

### **NORFOLK INTERNATIONAL TERMINALS**

HCD staff reviewed the EFH assessment prepared by the Norfolk District ACOE for Norfolk International Terminals' (NIT) proposal to expand their existing facility on the east side of the

Elizabeth River in Norfolk, Virginia. The proposed work includes maintenance dredging of 122,000 cy of material from an area of approximately 46 acres, the installation of 1,000 linear feet of new bulkhead waterward of existing mean low water line, and the filling of 1.30 acres of intertidal and subtidal habitat (1.06 acres of subtidal and 0.24 acres of intertidal). Channelward of the new bulkhead, the applicant proposes to construct a 112-foot wide by 1,000-foot long marginal wharf parallel to the existing bulkhead. As compensatory mitigation for the impacts on the intertidal and subtidal shallows, the applicant proposes to make contributions to the Chesapeake Land Trust and to the Elizabeth River Aquatic Resources Trust fund, and to create one acre of additional oyster reef. HCD provided several EFH conservation recommendations, including providing us with a copy of the in-lieu-fee agreements with the Chesapeake Land Trust and the Elizabeth River Aquatic Resources Trust, and additional information on the proposed oyster reef. HCD also recommended that dredging between February 15 and June 30 be prohibited to protect migrating and spawning anadromous fish that are a prey species of federally managed fish such as bluefish. ([Karen.Greene@noaa.gov](mailto:Karen.Greene@noaa.gov), 732/ 872-3023)

**MILFORD FIELD OFFICE, 212 ROGERS AVENUE, MILFORD, CT 06460**

**REGIONAL TEAM DISCUSSES DREDGED MATERIAL PLACEMENT PLAN**

The Regional Dredging Team charged with developing an interim and long-term Dredged Material Management Plan for dredging projects over 25,000 cubic yards (yds<sup>3</sup>) or federally managed projects in the waters of Long Island Sound has begun its efforts. These projects are managed under the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act although Long Island Sound is classified as a water of the United States under the Clean Water Act. A meeting to discuss the operating procedures, development of a working charter for the group, scheduling, interim protocols, and public outreach took place at the NMFS Laboratory in Milford, Connecticut. Although funding of the comprehensive alternatives identification and assessment must await funding under the 2007 budget, the group has been asked by their leadership to formulate the methodology needed to assess dredging projects occurring within the Sound and its adjacent waters which may seek to place sediment in the Central and Western Long Island Sound Dredged Material Disposal Sites that were designated last year. The challenge of designing and implementing an interim assessment protocol is hampered by the limited number of dredging material relocation site alternatives presently available or that members may be aware of in the region. The overall effort is likely to require at least a year to complete.

([Michael.Ludwig@noaa.gov](mailto:Michael.Ludwig@noaa.gov), 203/ 882-6504)

**DREDGING PERMIT SOUGHT FOR INTREPID SEA, AIR & SPACE MUSEUM**

The New York District, ACOE recently issued a Public Notice for an application by the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum to dredge approximately 13,000 cubic yards (yd<sup>3</sup>) at the western end of the U.S.S. Intrepid, and to subsequently place the material at an upland location in New York or New Jersey where the dredged material could be used beneficially. Dredging is proposed with a standard environmental bucket with return flow to the waterway. Habitat Conservation Division staff await the New York District's essential fish habitat assessment for this proposal, and will review and comment on the project after that document is received.

([Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov](mailto:Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov), 203/ 882-6504)

### **BENEFICIAL USES FOR NARRAGANSETT DREDGED MATERIAL**

Investigations regarding the potential beneficial use of sandy sediment dredged from Point Judith Pond in Narragansett, Rhode Island for eroding beaches along the South Coast of Rhode Island west of the pond has advanced to a real opportunity. Work will begin this fall to relocate the sediment to the Matunuck Beach area by barging and placing the sediment within the 15 to 18 foot isobath. A cooperative effort between the state, ACOE, and federal resource agencies has concluded that nearshore placement of the sediment should alleviate the erosion of the beach. Seafloor sampling and the development of a fitted model of the wave and current energy fields along Matunuck Beach were used by Dr. Boothroyd and his associates at the University of Rhode Island to assess the existing conditions along the beach face and nearshore zone and determine the utility of the effort. Because of the presence of juvenile American lobster habitat off the beach and spawning and nursery use of the pond by winter flounder, the project had to be designed to use a relatively small window of opportunity, yet be appreciative of the sea state created by storm events. A sequential dredging schedule has been developed that requires the dredging to commence at the inner portions of the Federal Navigation Project and move seaward. ([Michael.Ludwig@noaa.gov](mailto:Michael.Ludwig@noaa.gov), 203/ 882-6504)

### **COMMERCIAL DOCKAGE AT MILL BASIN, JAMAICA BAY**

Substantial refurbishment, replacement, and expansion of structures have been proposed by Strickland Realty, LLC in Brooklyn's Mill Basin to facilitate vessel mooring. The commercial facilities resulting from the repair or installation of decking and floats represents a significant increase in the existing mooring capacity at the site. Staff from the Milford Field Office is coordinating with counterparts at the New York District, ACOE regarding this proposal. ([Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov](mailto:Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov), 203/ 882-6504)

### **NATURAL GAS PIPELINE PROJECT PROPOSED TO SUPPLY NEW YORK**

The ACOE has received permit applications from Columbia Gas Transmission Corporation, Millennium Pipeline Company, Empire Pipeline, Inc., Algonquin Gas Transmission, LLC, and Iroquois Gas Transmission System, LP, to construct the Northeast-07 (NE-07) Natural Gas Pipeline Project. If authorized, this proposal entails construction of approximately 280 miles of natural gas pipeline and appurtenant facilities in New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey. The applications were submitted in accordance with Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act for work in waters of the United States. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), in cooperation with the ACOE and other federal and state agencies, has prepared a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) regarding the project, to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments on the DSEIS are due in July. ([Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov](mailto:Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov), 203/ 882-6504)

**CHESAPEAKE BAY FIELD OFFICE, 410 SEVERN AVE, SUITE 107A, ANNAPOLIS,  
MD 21403**

## **INTERNATIONAL TIDAL WETLANDS CONFERENCE**

The International Tidal Wetlands Conference, sponsored by the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore Campus, was held from May 31 through June 2, 2006 at Salisbury State University in Salisbury, Maryland. The focus of the conference was to discuss the ecological, economic, and engineering issues associated with using dredge material to restore the deteriorating and eroding tidal marshes of the mid-Chesapeake Bay, including marshes located within the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in Dorchester County, Maryland. Speakers from all parts of the United States and abroad participated in the conference, which included formulating and appraising restoration strategies within informal discussion groups formed during the conference. Since the mid-1900s, various factors have been responsible for the gradual decline, break-up, and erosion of more than 11,000 acres of brackish water marshes on the Blackwater Refuge, including sea-level rise, land subsidence, salinity intrusion, and predation. Dredge material generated from maintenance of the Port of Baltimore approach channels in the Chesapeake Bay mainstem would provide a significant source of non-contaminated nutrient-rich material, which, through thin-layering technology, could be used to restore pre-existing elevations within deteriorated wetlands to allow for successful re-colonization by native brackish water emergent marsh plants, such as Olney's three-square. Successful restoration of Eastern Shore tidal marshes will also have broad-ranging positive impacts on the ecology and water quality of the mid-Chesapeake Bay region. ([John.Nichols@NOAA.GOV](mailto:John.Nichols@NOAA.GOV), 410/ 267-5675)